

Message Text

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SUBJECT: TAX EVASION SCANDAL INVOLVES GOM

REF: MEXICO 6428

1. SUMMARY: A MULTI-FACETED TAX EVASION SCANDAL INVOLVING ELEMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE TREASURY AND A SPECIAL "ANTI-GUERRILA" INVESTIGATIVE UNIT OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT POLICE WAS REVEALED BY MEXICO CITY NEWSPAPERS JUNE 26. MANY OF THE DETAILS OF THE ALLEGED TAX FRAUD BY SEVERAL AS YET UNNAMED MEXICAN FIRMS, AND THE ALLEGED RESULTANT EXTORTION BY POLICE AGENTS OF THOSE INVOLVED, HAVE NOT BEEN REVEALED. HOWEVER, AT LEAST 20 PEOPLE, INCLUDING COL. JORGE OBREGON LIMA, COMMANDER OF THE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION FOR THE PREVENTION OF DELINQUENCY (FORMERLY THE SECRET SERVICE), HAVE BEEN DETAINED AND INTERROGATED EITHER BY FEDERAL OR MEXICO CITY AUTHORITIES. THE FRAUD IS SAID TO INVOLVE APPROXIMATELY 800 MILLION PESOS OF TAX MONIES OWED TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND AT LEAST 11 MILLION PESOS OF EXTORTION FUNDS ALLEGEDLY PAID BY THE SWINDLERS TO POLICE AGENTS UNDER OBREGON'S COMMAND. END SUMMARY.

2. SEVERAL MEXICAN FIRMS HAVE DEFRAUDED THE SECRETARIAT OF THE TREASURY OF 800 MILLION PESOS (ALMOST 65 MILLION DOLLARS) IN TAX PAYMENTS, MEXICO CITY DAILIES REPORTED

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JUNE 26. ACCORDING TO CONFUSED AND OFTEN CONTRADICTIONARY

PRESS REPORTS, THE COMPANIES, OPERATING THROUGH A PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM, OBTAINED FALSE INVOICES FOR NONEXISTENT EQUIPMENT, AND USED THESE INVOICES TO DECLARE HIGHER EXPENSES, I.E., LOWER TAXABLE INCOME, ON THEIR TAX STATEMENTS. AT THE SAME TIME, TWO EMPLOYEES OF THE TREASURY MINISTRY STOLE FISCAL STAMPS, USED TO PROVE PAYMENT OF TAXES, AND SOLD THEM TO MEXICAN COMPANIES. THE ACCUSED TREASURY EMPLOYEES, FERNANDO SALAZAR MENDEZ, WHO WORKED IN THE MINISTRY'S PRINTING OFFICE, AND MARIO ALTAMIRANO, A FORMER TAX INSPECTOR, SAID, IN THEIR DECLARATIONS BEFORE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES, THAT TWO AGENTS OF THE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION FOR THE PREVENTION OF DELINQUENCY (DIPD), JESUS LUNA AND MIGUEL SAAVERRA, DISCOVERED THEIR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, BUT INSTEAD OF ARRESTING THEM, DEMANDED A PIECE OF THE ACTION.

3. THE FRAUD FIRST BECAME KNOWN WHEN ARREST WARRANTS WERE ISSUED FOR JOSE SALOMON TANUS, CHIEF INSPECTOR OF THE DIPD, RAFAEL M. RENDON, HIS ASSISTANT, AND TWO SPECIAL AGENTS, RAFAEL MARTINEZ VIDAL AND FAUSTO ALCANTARA QUIROZ. REPORTEDLY, THE WARRANTS WERE BASED ON A COMPLAINT BROUGHT AGAINST TANUS BY A RELATIVE OF ONE OF ELEVEN INDIVIDUALS TANUS HAD DETAINED IN CONNECTION WITH THE INVESTIGATION OF THE TAX FRAUD. ACCORDING TO THE UNIDENTIFIED ACCUSER, TANUS HAD ARRESTED THE ELEVEN INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT INFORMING HIS SUPERIOR, OBREGON, AND HAD PROMISED THEM THEIR RELEASE UPON PAYMENT OF ONE MILLION PESOS EACH. RENDON, MARTINEZ, AND ALCANTARA ALLEGEDLY ACCEPTED THE "RANSOMS" FROM THE FAMILIES OF THE DETAINEES. THE INDIVIDUALS WERE RELEASED AS PROMISED, BUT AGENTS OF THE FEDERAL ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE SUBSEQUENTLY DISCOVERED IN TANUS' OFFICE DOCUMENTS WHICH LEAD TO THE RE-ARREST OF THE ELEVEN INDIVIDUALS.

4. EFFORTS TO LOCATE TANUS AND HIS ALLEGED ACCOMPLICES ON JUNE 25 WERE FUTILE, AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ANNOUNCED THAT TANUS HAD LEFT THE COUNTRY AFTER BEING INFORMED ON JUNE 23 THAT HE WAS WANTED FOR QUESTIONING BY AGENTS OF THE FEDERAL ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE. HOWEVER, ON JUNE 27, TANUS COMMUNICATED WITH THE OFFICE

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OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, DECLARED HIMSELF A VICTIM "OF THE HANDIWORK OF THE TWENTY-THIRD OF SEPTEMBER LEAGUE OR JEWISH GROUPS WHOM I PREVIOUSLY INVESTIGATED FOR FRAUDULENT ACTIVITIES," AND OFFERED TO GIVE FORMAL TESTIMONY TO JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES. TANUS PRESENTED HIMSELF ON JUNE 29, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER, OBREGON LIMA ALSO WAS DETAINED. OBREGON MAINTAINS HE WAS UNAWARE ANYONE HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH

THE TAX FRAUD. HOWEVER, TANUS HAS FINGERED OBREGON AS THE INSTIGATOR OF THE EXTORTION SCHEME AND HAS CLAIMED THAT THE COLONEL INTERROGATED THE SUBJECTS PERSONALLY. BOTH MEN HAVE BEEN FORMALLY IMPRISONED AND RELIEVED OF THEIR POSTS.

5. THE CHARGES AGAINST OBREGON AND TANUS ARE VIOLATION OF THEIR "OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY", IN NOT NOTIFYING SUPERIORS OF ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE TAX INVESTIGATION AND IN TANUS' CASE, IN LEAVING HIS POST WITHOUT PERMISSION. THE OFFENSE, WHICH CARRIES A PENALTY OF TWO TO TEN YEARS, THUS MAKING THE DETAINEES INELIGIBLE FOR BOND, WAS COMMITTED AGAINST THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, OF WHICH BOTH WERE EMPLOYEES, AND THUS IS BEING HANDLED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT. HOWEVER, OBREGON'S AND TANUS' POSSIBLE ROLE IN THE TAX EVASION SCHEME ITSELF, A FEDERAL CRIME, IS BEING INVESTIGATED, SIMULTANEOUSLY, BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC.

6. ALTHOUGH THE NAMES OF MANY OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED, IT IS KNOWN THAT THE DETAINEES INCLUDE SEVERAL PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS THE MIDDLEMEN WHO PURCHASED THE FALSE INVOICES, AND WHO ARE CHARGED WITH FISCAL FRAUD, FALSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS, AND USE OF FALSIFIED DOCUMENTS.

7. THE TREASURY TAX INVASION SCANDAL COMES ON THE HEELS OF THE DISCOVERY OF A SCHEME TO DEFRAUD NACIONAL FINANCIERA, THE GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT BANK, OF 77 MILLION PESOS. IN THAT CASE SEVEN PEOPLE, INCLUDING RELATIVES OF 1952 PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL GEN. MIGUEL HENRIQUEZ GUZMAN, HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH USING BAD CHECKS TO PURCHASE GOVERNMENT BONDS. THE NAFINSA SCANDAL ITSELF CAME ONLY WEEKS AFTER REVELATIONS THAT THE FORMER HEAD OF THE CHAMBER OF THE RUBBER INDUSTRY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPTED CLANDESTINE PAYMENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL RUBBER COMPANIES (REF). REPORTEDLY, THE PAYMENTS WERE PASSED ALONG TO OFFICIALS IN THE SECRETARIAT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, WHO SUBSEQUENTLY RECOMMENDED A HIKE IN RUBBER PRODUCT PRICES.

8. COMMENT: THE DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURY MINISTRY FRAUD IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING GIVEN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO'S VEHEMENT PUBLIC REMARKS AGAINST GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, AND PARTICULARLY THOUGHT-PROVOKING IN THAT THE MINISTRY INVOLVED IS THE ONE JLP FORMERLY HEADED. AFTER ALL, IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT IN THE GOM THE ROOTS OF CORRUPTION RUN UPWARD AS WELL AS DOWNWARD. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE HEARD UNOFFICIALLY THAT OFFICE HOLDERS IN MANY BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT ARE APPREHENSIVE

THAT THE DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURY FRAUD WILL LEAD TO
THE UNCOVERING OF OTHER CLANDESTINE FINANCIAL DEALINGS
INVOLVING GOVERNMENT DEPENDENCIES.
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